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ABSTRACT

The period from 1950 to 1970 was no exception to the historical rule of how federal policy decisions regarding Indian education have been made. Regardless of the influences, policy decisions have always been made under pressing circumstances, usually without benefit of long-range planning, and choices have often been made from among equally undesirable alternatives. The many administrative turnovers in the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the White House changed both direction and emphasis of Indian education. The favorite projects of one administration became legacies to the next, further complicating matters. The late 1960's were a particularly turbulent period in the history of Indian affairs. Legitimate concerns about over-emphasis of acculturation and dissatisfaction with educational attainment formed the basis of much criticism of Indian education, which was concentrated in the well-publicized Kennedy Report. The Coleman Report and the National Study of Indian Education could have helped clarify the issues but they were largely ignored. The future of Indian education was uncertain going into the 1970's. The issue of control of schools obscured that of quality of education. While Indian people clearly aspired to do well in the modern world, no one had determined what they wanted in the way of education. (SB)

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POLICY MAKING IN A CRUCIBLE
THE FEDERAL EXPERIENCE IN INDIAN EDUCATION, 1950-1970

As the decade of the 1950's began, Willard W. Beatty was nearing the end of a 15 year tenure as director of the Federal program of Indian education which began in 1936. Today, a quarter of a century after he left that post, he is acclaimed as one of the most imaginative and innovative figures in the history of Indian education. He came to the Bureau of Indian Affairs from the American progressive education movement in which he played a leading role. He began his Federal service under Indian Commissioner John Collier, anthropologist, reformer, and champion of Indian rights. In 1928 the celebrated Merriam Report had shattered the stodgy, authoritarian, and unabashedly assimilationist character of the BIA's school system. The Indian Reorganization Act, passed in 1934, had given impetus to the control by Indians of their own affairs.

Typical of Beatty's reforms were: the abolition of the remnants of military type organization still lurking in BIA boarding schools; the infusion of new blood with fresh ideas into the supervisory staffs: the use of reservation day schools as focal points for community development and for improved farming, ranching, and homemaking; and the dignifying of the native culture in the schools by the development of learning materials which included use of the native languages and Indian subject matter.

Then came World War II and the BIA's educational program was devastated through loss of personnel, deterioration of school facilities, and the general upheaval and dislocation which war brings about. Margaret Szasz in her book, Education and the American Indian: The Road to Self-Determination, 1928-1973, pays homage to Beatty's early years. She appears to feel, however, that after the war Beatty got off the track by becoming too much of an "acculturationist" in his objectives. If this is true, perhaps it brings us to the question of how Federal Indian policy in the education field has come about.

Who Makes or Influences the Policy Decisions?

Who has formulated the Federal government's policy affecting its relationship with its Indian constituents? Who or what has influenced, shaped, and guided it? Probably most persons assume that the Bureau of Indian Affairs or the Bureau's commissioners have done so. This is partially true, of course, but it is true to a lesser extent than is generally supposed. For one thing, the BIA operates within a framework of laws passed by the Congress. A number of these laws, such as the Indian Reorganization Act already referred to, have been beneficial. But some actions of Congress have been disastrous. For example, House Concurrent Resolution 108 which in the early 1950's called for the early termination of the Federal trust relationship with Indian tribes so frightened Indian leaders that they have been dubious ever since about accepting programs which call upon Indian groups to assume increased responsibility for the administration of their own affairs.

Then too, during the two decades with which this paper is primarily concerned, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, a part of the Department of Interior, was under the oversight of the Assistant Secretary for Public Land Management. Typically this official had little conversance with Indian affairs. Moreover, the BIA was always in competition for the budget dollar with bureaus oriented toward public resources. Similarly, the Bureau of the Budget (now the Office of Management and Budget) by its control over funding exerted great influence over the initiation of educational programs. Occasionally, as in the late 1960's, a Secretary of the Interior would take a personal interest in actively directing Indian affairs.

Over the years "Indian interest organizations" have exerted influence on Indian policy - for example, the Association on American Indian Affairs, a New York based group composed mainly of non-Indians. Also, many scholars, particularly anthropologists, sociologists, and linguists, have taken more than an academic interest in Indian matters and have conducted research, written profusely, served as consultants, and played the role of advocate regarding Indian policy.

The most decisive determiner of all, perhaps, has been the social climate of a particular period or era - the temper of the times, so to speak. This will be illustrated in the remainder of this paper. Until recent times Indians themselves have perhaps had the least influence on policy but that is changing rapidly now. But always policy has been made in the crucible of pressing circumstances, usually without benefit of long range planning, and often from among alternatives none of which was desirable.

The Beatty-Thompson Transition

Willard Beatty resigned his position as director of Indian education in 1951 to accept the job of deputy director of UNESCO. It was understood that he had done so because Dillon Myer, the last Indian commissioner in the Truman administration, had demoted him from a line to a staff role, setting up a situation in which he did not believe he could function. His successor, Hildegard Thompson, was made director the following year and Beatty had a hand in selecting her. Mrs. Thompson was a thoroughgoing professional educator who had worked with the people of the Phillipines before joining the BIA. At the time of her promotion she was director of Navajo education. How could she hope to succeed in a staff role when Beatty felt he could not? Because, as Beatty is reported to have said, "She can bend farther without breaking than any person I know."

Before his departure from the BIA Beatty had set in motion certain policies and programs that Mrs. Thompson would carry forward for many years, in addition to those which she herself initiated. What were some of these programs? Did they represent a shift from Beatty's earlier philosophy? And if so were there good reasons for it?

The Special Navajo Education Program

In 1868 the United States government concluded a treaty with the Navajo Tribe and the latter was permitted to return home from Ft. Sumner on the Pecos River where they had been interned for four long years. The treaty provided, among other things, that the Government would provide a teacher for every 30 Navajo children who presented themselves at school. For 78 years relatively few Navajo children presented themselves and by and large the Government was well content to let it go at that. By 1946 the war had come and finally ended and only 6 thousand Navajo children of school age were in school whereas 18 thousand were not. But the war had accomplished something unforeseen. Some 3,400 young Navajo men had served well in the armed forces throughout the world. They were amazed by the variety and complexity of the world beyond the reservation and they were shocked to learn of the handicap which lack of education had imposed upon them. They came home determined that Navajo youngsters would receive an education.

Willard Beatty was an innovative progressive educationist but he was also a pragmatist and he was not doctrinaire. Schools could not be built on the reserva-

tion overnight and he used the only space he had available - in old established boarding schools whose enrollments had been declining because Indian youth in their regions were enrolling in public schools. These boarding schools ranged geographically from Oklahoma to Arizona to California to Oregon. Beatty assigned Hildegard Thompson and a staff of experienced teachers to design an educational program which would provide functional English language skills and a basic marketable vocational skill in five years time to out-of-school adolescents who would soon be looking toward marriage and employment. By 1961 more than 4 thousand Navajo students had been graduated from this program and thousands of others had attended for varying lengths of time.

There was much about the program that was not ideal. Boarding schools for Indians have long been an anathema to many persons and the BIA itself for many years has not viewed the boarding school as a preferred way of educating Indian children and youth. Navajo officials approved the plan, no doubt with some misgiving, and Navajo parents suffered it rather than see their children go without an education. Beatty and Thompson believed that in the above described situation the choice was not between desirable alternatives but between the course they chose and a lifetime of illiteracy and poverty for thousands of Navajos.

Educational Research

During the 1940's Beatty had contracted with the University of Chicago for some research in Indian education and in 1950 he made a similar arrangement with the University of Kansas at Lawrence. This program eas extended after Mrs. Thompson became director. Primarily this research consisted of administering standardized achievement tests to some 14 thousand Indian students and nearly 10 thousand white students in eleven states and in public, mission, and BIA schools. The tests showed that Indian students on the average did not achieve as well as white students and that they compared less favorably the farther they went in school. These results were widely noted in Indian affairs circles and, later, among persons concerned with the education of children of other disadvantaged minorities. The findings were frequently interpreted as showing that Indian children were receiving an inferior education in the schools in which they were enrolled. However, there were two findings which escaped notice almost entirely, although they were included in the text of the report. These were: (1) that the white children in the public schools of rural North Dakota and South Dakota achieved significantly higher at every grade level than the white children in the rural schools of eastern Oklahoma; and (2) that both the white children and the Indian children in the public schools of Montana and Wyoming, which had been integrated for a generation, said thatall or most of their friends were of their own race. All of these findings were actually precursors of the findings of the monumental Equality of Educational Opportunity survey, commonly referred to as the "Coleman Report", which was conducted by the United States Office of Education some ten years later in 1965. In the early and middle 1950's such comparative data were rare.

There is a tendency for unanticipated and distasteful research findings to be ignored or misinterpreted. The Coleman Report suffered that fate. We will return to a discussion of the latter later in this paper. Actually, Beatty was disappointed in the University of Kansas findings which were published after he left the BIA. He had hoped that improvements which he felt he had made in BIA schools after the war would be reflected in something close to parity between the achievement of BIA pupils and the white pupils in public schools. He was mistaken in this. It would be some years before even professional educators would understand that disadvantaged and culturally different pupils would not achieve such parity,

short term, simply by attending good schools.

The Eisenhower-Emmons Era

The years of the Eisenhower administration from 1953 to 1961 were not brilliant ones for Indian education. This was the decade of House Concurrent Resolution 108, previously alluded to, which sought to terminate the Government's role as trustee. Termination was actually accomplished with the Menominee and Klamath tribes and while termination was repudiated as national policy before the decade was out, the Government continued to define its trusteeship very narrowly. For example, Federal educational services, whether performed directly by the BIA or by contract with the states under the authority of the Johnson-O'Malley Act, was provided solely on the basis of the tax exempt status of Indian land held in trusteeship by the Federal government. Thus, Federal educational services were awarded only to Indians living on reservations and were denied to urban Indians, even though the latter might have moved to the city with the encouragement of the BIA's "relocation" branch, later named "employment assistance." Treaty obligations were considered to be of little effect.

Actually, the concern of the Federal government, including the BIA, seemed to be more in the direction of compensating states and local school districts for loss of tax revenue. Later in the decade tax exempt Indian land was included under the "Federal impact" principle and public school districts were compensated by PL 874 and PL 815 funds administered by the U.S. Office of Education. There was then a return to the use of Johnson-O'Malley funds for the enrichment of school programs.

NEEP

During most of the Eisenhower administration the Commissioner of Indian Affairs was Glenn Emmons. The attitudes of Mr. Emmons, a Gallup, New Mexico banker, about relations between Indians and the Federal government and those of, say, John Collier, an anthropologist, were light years apart. Emmons believed that Indian children should be in public schools wherever possible and the transfer of Indian pupils to public schools went on apace during his administration. But, importantly and to his credit, Emmons believed that Indian children should be in some kind of school. So, between 1953 and 1955 the Navajo Emergency Education Program was carried out. This involved a crash building program on the Navajo Reservation, including the expansion of many existing school facilities. Much of the construction was woefully substandard and, fortunately, most of it has since been replaced.

The Bordertown Program

A unique part of NEEP was what came to be known as the "bordertown" program. This consisted of the BIA's building dormitories in eight communities near to but not on the Navajo reservation (later expanded to other communities near other reservations) compensating the school districts for the construction of additional classrooms, and paying the district tuition for the education of the pupils. Approximately one thousand Navajo pupils were accommodated in this way each year. In 1965, at the direction of the Senate Appropriations Committee, the BIA evaluated this program and concluded that public schools being established on the Navajo Reservation provided a better long range solution because pupils could live at home with less disruption of family and tribal life and the Navajo community could exercise control of the school. In 1971 the program was again evaluated by the Southwestern Cooperative Educational Laboratory at the request of the Navajo Tribe and the BIA. Somewhat surprisingly in view of the supposedly important disadvantages cited above, students, graduates, parents, teachers, school officials, and

townspeople expressed general satisfaction with the program and recommended that it be continued.

Indians in Public Schools

By 1970 two of every three Indian pupils were enrolled in a public school. This movement toward the public schools had actually begun in the 1940's and had accelerated sharply in the 1950's. Many people could not understand what the Federal government was doing in the school business anyway. Education has traditionally been a state and local function in America. For instance, at some point during the 1930's or 1940's the Congress had passed a law requiring that BIA schools in South Dakota follow the state course of study, probably as a reaction against Willard Beatty's innovations. The financial contributions of the Federal government to state and local schools under the Johnson-O'Malley and "Federal impact" laws has been discussed earlier.

Following the Supreme Court's school desegregation decision in 1954 the impetus toward public school enrollment was heightened. More than once the BIA was called upon by a member of Congress or some other interested person to explain why it did not consider itself to be in violation of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 by operating racially segregated schools. The BIA could only explain that it did not operate schools for the purpose of racial segregation but only to provide educational opportunity to Indian pupils who otherwise would be without it.

The Coleman Report found that in 1965 Indian pupils in public schools were the "most integrated" of any ethnic group. That is, they more than any other ethnic group, including whites, had a preponderance of classmates of some ethnicity other than their own. By 1965 the BIA found that Indians represented only about ten percent of the enrollment of the public schools to which they paid Johnson-O'Malley aid.

And yet the relationship between the public schools and Indians and the public schools and the BIA has frequently been an uneasy one. Indian parents often complain of feeling like "outsiders" and it is quite obvious that in most public schools Indians cannot exercise much control because of their small numbers. On the other hand public school officials sometimes resent the "Feds" if they think the BIA is trying to supervise or advise them, while BIA personnel frequently have felt that public school people have little expertise and even less interest in understanding the special educational needs of Indian students and providing for them.

The Kennedy-Udall-Nash Years

John F. Kennedy took office in January of 1961 and named Stewart Udall as his Secretary of the Interior. It is clear now that as of that moment the BIA's educational apparatus was in for a shaking up. Udall displayed a keen personal interest in Indian affairs and very soon appointed a task force to investigate. It was the better part of a year before a new commissioner was named and when the appointment came it proved to be Philleo Nash who had been a member of the task force. Nash was an anthropologist by training and a politician and public administrator by inclination and choice. He entered upon his new assignment with zest. He was well liked by the Indian leadership throughout the country and played an active role in the "nuts and bolts" operation of his agency as, for example, in the budget and appropriation process. He came in with a rather poor opinion of the BIA's education program but thought better of it as time went on.

Hildegard Thompson stayed on as director of education. Always the professional, she concentrated during these years on trying to improve the quality of the education program as she saw its needs to be. She promoted the inservice training of BIA education employees through summer workshops. She and her staff developed

operating standards for boarding and day schools and construction standards for new school buildings to replace outmoded, dilapidated, and unsafe facilities. She upgraded the professional standards of pupil guidance personnel. In 1962 she inaugurated a master teacher grade with a substantial pay differential for teaching excellence. An adult education program begun in 1955 in five Indian communities had spread by 1965 to 192 communities with activities varying from literacy training to community development. Summer programs for children and youth, many sponsored by Indian tribes and communities and designed to provide learning opportunity throughout the year, grew from an enrollment of 2,000 in 1960 to 26,000 in 1964. In 1963 the Institute of American Indian Arts, widely acclaimed for its concept and excellence, was established. During the ten year period from 1955 onward the number of Indian youth annually continuing their education beyond high school increased from 2,300 to 7,000 and BIA funds available for scholarship aid at the college level grew from a little over $9,000 to more than $1 million. During her 13 year tenure the number of Indian children in school grew from 99,000 to 134,000 and the number of school age children not in school declined from nearly 20,000 to less than 9,000.

These accomplishments, while substantial, were not dramatized and they drew little attention from either the public or from tribal or government officialdom. For one thing the educational deficit of Indian children was widely accepted as prima facie evidence that the schools had failed. For another, the mounting preoccupation with local Indian control of schools was beginning to obscure interest in the quality of educational programs, per se. As 1965 approached, Mrs. Thompson correctly sensed that the storm of controversy that was gathering was something she could do nothing about. She voluntarily retired in November of 1965.

The Udall-Nash-Bennett Relationship

Eight months elapsed after Hildegard Thompson's retirement before her successor was named and on the job. But a good deal happened in those eight months nevertheless. Secretary Udall made it quite clear that he was very dissatisfied with the educational program of the BIA. He felt that the evidence was plain - Indian students were not achieving as well in school as white students and they were falling farther behind the longer they went; they were dropping out of school earlier and in greater numbers than white students; fewor of them were going to college and fewer of them were graduating. Education was not the only thing wrong with the BIA - unemployment among Indians was as high as 40 percent and per capita income was only about $1500.

By the spring of 1966 Philleo Nash was out as commissioner, his resignation having been called for, and Robert L. Bennett was in. Bennett, a member of the Oneida tribe, was the first commissioner of Indian ancestry since the Civil War. A career man with the BIA, he came to Washington from Alaska where he had been the BIA's area director. He was a graduate of Haskell Indian Institute.

Immediately upon Bennett's appointment Secretary Udall called a meeting of BIA officials at Santa Fe. While the main subject matter of the conference had to do with reservation economics, a block of time was also allotted to a panel of BIA educators for a discussion of ideas for improving the education program. The big educational news, however, was that a forthcoming organizational change would give the education branch divisional status headed by an assistant commissioner who would have line authority. It was also made clear that the new assistant commissioner would be selected from outside the BIA.

Interim Activities

While awaiting the selection of the new assistant commissioner, some rather significant developments took place under a "caretaker" acting director of education. During the spring an agreement was reached whereby the Rough Rock Boarding School, a newly constructed facility on the Navajo reservation, would be taken over and operated by a Navajo corporation called Diné. It was to be munificently funded jointly by the Office of Economic Opportunity and the BIA and it would be called the Rough Rock Demonstration School. Also, work went on cooperatively between the BIA and the U.S. Office of Education to include Indian pupils attending public schools in the benefits of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, passed the year before. Efforts went forward, as well, between the BIA, USOE, and the Congress to include, by amendment, Indians attending BIA schools in the benefits of ESEA. And of course there was always the budget making and appropriations seeking which by then had become a year round operation.

Carl Marburger

Carl Marburger became assistant commissioner for education on July 6, 1966. He came from Detroit where he had been an assistant superintendent of schools, responsible for programs for disadvantaged pupils. He had also been a consultant to USOE which recommended him to Secretary Udall. Commissioner Bennett did not participate in the selection and did not meet Marburger until after he had reported for duty. Dr. Marburger was personable and while he knew little about Indians he knew a great deal about disadvantaged urban children. He was greeted with real enthusiasm by Indian activists and by people in the Great Society programs. He also was well received by BIA educators but less well by BIA area directors whom he wished to bypass in dealing with BIA school officials.

Marburger stayed with the BIA exactly one year before leaving to become commissioner of education for the State of New Jersey. It is hard to assess his accomplishments in that brief time. Much of his time was spent getting the feel of his new job. There are two important things that he definitely accomplished. He organized the Indian Education Advisory Committee composed of 16 tribal leaders from all parts of the country, the first such consultative group ever created. And he worked out in cooperation with USOE the BIA participation in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act program which was to give BIA education efforts a tremendous financial lift.

Charles N. Zellers

Charles N. Zellers who followed Carl Marburger in September of 1967 as assistant commissioner for education, lasted out the decade but not much more. Commissioner Bennett had departed before Zellers did, both of them apparently casualties of political change, or changing ideologies, following Richard Nixon's inauguration in January of 1969. Louis Bruce, a Mohawk-Sioux Indian, succeeded Bennett as commissioner. Zellers, trained in business administration rather than education, had worked in the District of Columbia school system and the U.S. Office of Education.

One of Zellers first moves was to press forward what Marburger had begun, a reorganization and expansion of the Washington office staff. This involved the addition of specialists in the teaching of English as a second language, in early childhood education in anticipation of kindergartens, in curriculum development to better adapt the learning materials to the cultural background of students, and in psychological and guidance services to ameliorate the problems of boarding school students particularly. Perhaps most significant was what was called Project TRIBE,

a plan on the Rough Rock model described briefly earlier, whereby Indian groups could assume responsibility for the operation of their own school. In other words, Zellers tried to move to allay the most prevalent and virulent criticisms of BIA education - that the Indian culture, including the native languages, was being ignored and denigrated, that the boarding schools were barbaric and wreaking havoc with the mental health of the students in them, and that Indian tribes and communities were without authority or influence over the schools which served their children.

The last half of the decade of the 1960's was a turbulent period in the history of Indian education and little has been written about it. It may still be too early to attempt an analysis but perhaps a beginning can be made.

The BIA Historically

For those who are anti-establishment the Bureau of Indian Affairs is a sitting target. Few agencies in the Federal government have been established longer. It goes back to 1824, antedating the Department of the Interior by a quarter of a century. It has always been an unpopular agency, reflecting the uneasy national conscience about our native population which has ranged from rage and rancor to pious tears, bringing with it widely fluctuating policies. Many persons working for the BIA have looked with envy upon the National Park Service which brings so much happiness to millions of Americans each year. There has been a temptation for persons working in the BIA to develop what has been called a "garrison mentality", retreating into an ingroup stockade as protection against the verbal arrows and acid pens directed at them. This has been true of Indian employees as well as non-Indians.

It was not strange then that when the Senate Subcommittee on Education was approached in 1966 about including pupils attending BIA schools in the benefits of ESEA, the subcommittee raised the question of whether Indian education should not be moved to the Office of Education in HEW and asked Interior and HEW to jointly look into the matter. The two departments called Indian leaders together in Denver later that year and posed the question. The answer was a resounding "no" which was duly reported to the Senate. The next year President Johnson named a very secret White House task force to consider the same question. While its report was never made public, it is known that it recommended transfer of Indian education to USOE and the secretary of HEW was sent out to Kansas City to make the proposal to a gathering of Indian representatives. Again the response was decidedly negative. But yet a third time a leading anthropologist made the same recommendation to the new Nixon administration in 1969 and once again the National Congress of American Indians felt it necessary to veto the suggestion.

How could it be that Indians would wish to retain an agency with such a negative image? Might it not be that Indians felt that for good or ill the BIA was their own peculiar and particular agency, however often it may have seemed to fall short of their desires, and they did not wish to get lost in the labyrinthine structure of HEW? And, for whatever comfort it is to people in the BIA, while serving as a "lightning rod" for the frustrations of a wronged and deprived people may seem to be an inglorious role, it can be a useful one.

Biculturalism vs. Acculturation - An Adversary Relationship

In 1970 this writer did a synthesis of the literature of the 1960's on the education of the American Indian. The study revealed two separate and not very sympathetic camps. On the one hand are the biculturalists or cultural pluralists, most often scholars in the social sciences. On the other are the acculturation-

ists, often referred to by their critics as assimilationists. This group includes most educational practitioners, at least at the elementary and secondary school levels. Both sides make gestures toward the "both.....and" doctrine - that is both the dignifying and preserving of the native culture and the preparing of Indian youth to cope in the mainstream of present day American life. It is evident, however, that the cultural pluralists have their hearts in the first part - and the practitioners theirs in the second part - of the doctrine. Probably no one since Willard Beatty has worked hard enough at achieving a true combination of the two.

It is time for school people, whether of BIA, public, or denominational schools, to admit that they have been remiss (and this needs to be said by someone who has been a part of the establishment) in not being sensitive enough to the bicultural needs of Indian people. Indian children do need to know about their history, their heroes, and the current affairs of their tribe. Their acquiring of English language skills must be based upon the language they already know. And Indian parents must be involved in decision making about the schools which serve their children. On the other hand the critics of the schools are often intransigent in not trying to understand the practical problems with which school people are faced. For example they do not admit the difficulty of securing enough trained, bilingual Indian teachers or they insist on believing that the BIA operates boarding schools only to save money or to annihilate Indian culture. It is time for detente in the Indian education cold war!

The Great Society Programs

Beginning in 1964 the BIA, controversial as it was, confronted, or was confronted by, President Lyndon Johnson's Great Society programs. Having their genesis in the civil rights struggle beginning with the Supreme Court's desegregation decision in 1954, these programs heightened the public awareness of the problems of the socio-economically disadvantaged minorities and brought about rising expectations among the minorities themselves. Beginning in 1964 there emerged the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Office of Economic Opportunity, Community Action programs, Job Corps, Vista, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, and much more.

The initial reaction of the BIA was one of satisfaction that the mood of the nation had at last turned favorable toward the plight of American Indians and other disadvantaged peoples. It established liaison with the Office of Economic Opportunity and its component parts. But rising expectations were not to be satisfied by a long term effort and ancient wrongs could not wait to be righted in the next generation. Washington was soon full of bright eyed young people eager to set things right and looking for villains who had caused the problems. The BIA found that it was a prime suspect. This was a jarring experience for people who had not thought of themselves as villains. While it did not basically change the BIA's approval of the Great Society objectives, it made old line workers defensive. This posed a particular problem for Marburger and Zellers when they came in from outside to direct the education program. As Zellers said, being new he could not accept either credit or blame for what had happened in the past. But since the BIA was getting little credit and a great deal of blame it was not hard for BIA people to understand what he meant. And after all he was now head of the education effort, bad image and all. He could not escape the fact and it made it very hard for the BIA to succeed at anything.

A Basic Misconception

The criticism of the education of Indians was finally concentrated in the hearings and report of the Senate Subcommittee on Indian Education, popularly called the

Kennedy Report. It was wholly condemnatory of both the Federal and the public school effort. There is persuasive evidence that from the outset one of the objectives of the subcommittee was to effect the transfer of Indian education to HEW but in the face of determined Indian opposition it could not, in the end, recommend it. There were, however, two other very significant studies going on in the middle and late 1960's which, if they had been paid attention to, would have relieved much of the obfuscation about Indian education which the Kennedy Report with its distortions had brought about. These were the Coleman Report, alluded to earlier, and the National Study of Indian Education, commissioned by USOE and directed by Robert J. Havighurst of the University of Chicago.

Criticism of the education of Indians usually was of two kinds. First were the legitimate concerns about overemphasis on acculturation, the neglect of Indian cultural materials in the curriculum, the shortage of Indians in the instructional force, the large number of Indian pupils in boarding schools, and the lack of an Indian voice in running the schools. At the same time, the most bitter dissatisfaction with the education of Indians was most often expressed in terms of educational deficits - their low educational attainment in terms of years of schooling, their low achievement as measured by standardized tests, their high rate of dropout from school, the low percentage of high school graduates enrolling in college, the low college graduation rate, and, sometimes, the low self-concept of Indian students (although here the evidence was contradictory). These two lists of things were mentioned together so repeatedly that the idea of a cause and effect relationship took hold; that if the first list of things were eliminated the educational deficits would disappear or at least would decrease more rapidly. There was no real evidence to support that conclusion. No doubt the evils included in the first list needed to be corrected for humane, or ethical, or democratic reasons, but there was no warrant for supposing that their correction would erase the educational deficit.

Indeed, Coleman had discovered that the deficits were common to all disadvantaged groups - Negroes, Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, and Indians - and that Indians were the highest achieving of these groups, not the lowest. He concluded that the deficits were the product of the total society in which the children had grown up, and not primarily of the schools, although he concluded further that the disadvantaged students were far more dependent on the school for help than the more favored students. Havighurst, a respected sociologist of top rank nationally, reached basically the same conclusions. Havighurst, in addition, became so perturbed by some of the innuendoes coming out of the Senate Subcommittee hearings that boarding schools were causing abnormally high suicide rates that he took special pains to investigate the insinuations and found no evidence to support them.

The Kennedy Report contained 60 recommendations, many of them worthwhile, some of them naive, but it did pave the way for greatly increased appropriations for Indian education and for special legislation making it possible for Indian groups to exercise much more authority in the education field.

The Prospect

As the Indian education enterprise headed into the 1970's its future was uncertain and this was particularly tru of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. There had been a rapid turnover of leadership in the BIA and this was to get worse. The preeminent issue of control of schools seemed to be obscuring a concern for quality of education and for learning itself. There could be no question but that Indian people sought with a tenacity that was awesome to preserve the best elements of the old culture but there were signs too that they aspired fervently to do well in the

modern world. There were not many signs that in spite of all the sound and fury about self-determination, anyone was doing much to find out just what the rank and file of Indian people really wanted in the way of education.

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Topeka, Kansas August 1976

(The above mini-history was written a year ago last August in response to a telephoned request from the chairperson of Task Force #5 on education of the American Indian Policy Review Commission. She included it in the final report of her task force to the Commission's director. Since then I have found no trace of it in spite of several inquiries. Perhaps, understandably, it was a casualty of the compression which voluminous reports must undergo. However, since many of you were important participants during the two decades recounted, I thought you might be interested in seeing it.

M.C. October, 1977)